United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

BUDGET

SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

September 23, 2013

Governor Scott Walker 115 East Capitol Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Walker:

America's health care reform law, the Affordable Care Act (ACA), presents opportunities for our state to strengthen the economic security of Wisconsin families and businesses. Our Midwestern neighbors have widely accepted these opportunities. Governors from both parties in Michigan, Iowa, Illinois and Minnesota are supporting the ACA's Medicaid expansion. All of these states are also working with the federal government to help establish a Health Insurance Marketplace. Rather than share this commonsense Midwestern approach, you chose not to take our state down the strongest path forward.

I am disappointed that you have broken with our state's strong tradition of advancing health care reforms. First, you chose not to build a Wisconsin-made, state-based Health Insurance Marketplace for individuals and small businesses. Instead, you asked the federal government to do it. That Marketplace will start open enrollment in the coming week on October 1, 2013, with coverage beginning January 1, 2014.

Second, our state could have seized the opportunity to strengthen our BadgerCare program through a federal partnership. Instead, you chose a path that covers fewer people at a higher cost to taxpayers. When compared with expanding BadgerCare under the ACA, the nonpartisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau estimates that your plan will cost state taxpayers \$119 million more over the next two years to cover 85,000 fewer people.

Now it is time for you take responsibility for the path you have taken and help ensure that Wisconsin families and businesses receive the quality health coverage that they deserve.

This week, an estimated 92,000 Wisconsinites will receive letters from your office alerting them that someone in their household will be dropped from the BadgerCare coverage they have relied on. Surely receiving your communication will create uncertainty, confusion, and anxiety for these families. A number of questions will arise: 'Who in my household will lose coverage?'; 'Will I be able to afford health insurance premiums in the new Health Insurance Marketplace?'; 'How can I enroll in coverage?' It is my hope that your office takes responsibility for ensuring that these hard-working Wisconsin families access and maintain health insurance coverage. This commitment must go beyond a simple letter in the mail addressed to no one in particular. It is my hope that your administration will engage in more personal, direct and effective outreach, up to and including administering phone calls; partnering with county governments serving these

citizens; and working collaboratively with community organizations and federal and local officials in a strong effort to provide enrollment assistance in the new Marketplace.

Further, I am calling on you to immediately provide individualized communications to Wisconsinites at risk of losing BadgerCare coverage. Your letters to be sent this week read: "If anyone in your household is affected by the change in income limits and you are still enrolled in BadgerCare Plus, you will get another letter in December letting you know exactly who is affected and how their eligibility will change." A personalized message in December does not qualify as timely notice. As you are well aware, Wisconsin families that do not enroll in Marketplace coverage by December 15, 2013 will lose health insurance coverage beginning on January 1, 2014. These families cannot afford to pay for any shortcomings you are creating in not seamlessly moving these Wisconsinites from BadgerCare to the new Marketplace.

Adding to the confusion for these families, you have been calling for full repeal of the ACA. I find this especially troubling given the fact that your stated effort to cut the uninsured rate in Wisconsin relies on "Obamacare" to provide coverage to the uninsured, including the 92,000 you are kicking off of BadgerCare. As you must know, repealing, defunding or delaying the ACA would leave these Wisconsinites without access to coverage. They deserve better than the uncertainty you are offering.

These Wisconsin residents' economic security has been put at risk by your BadgerCare decision. Instead of playing political games with people's health care and calling for repealing, defunding or delaying the ACA, it is my sincere hope that you will lead on the law's implementation because you have a shared responsibility to make sure it works for Wisconsin. The people of our state are tired of politicians playing political games with their health care security. They want bipartisan action and solutions that work for our state. It's time to move health care reform forward and put progress for Wisconsin ahead of politics.

I look forward to working together on this shared responsibility.

Sincerely,

Fammy Baldwin

United States Senator